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POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY.

THE MONROE DOCTRINE.

WHETHER the student of history and politics will find in the study of what is commonly called the Monroe Doctrine encouragement or discouragement, depends upon his attitude toward the question propounded by Sir William Hamilton : "Is truth, or is the mental exercise in the pursuit of truth, the superior end?" If he must have the truth, he can find it; but in the multitude and variety of interpretations proposed to him, he will require great firmness of mind to hold fast to it when he has found it. If, on the other hand, he merely seeks indefinite exercise, this may be readily obtained in following what is fast becoming, if it has not already become, the *ignis fatuus* of American politics.

The object of this essay is to show the actual meaning and limitations of President Monroe's declarations, as they were understood at the time, and their subsequent history and perversions. In order that nothing essential to an understanding of the subject may be lacking, I will quote all the passages in President Monroe's message that have been cited as containing the expression of his doctrine :

[1] At the proposal of the Russian imperial government, made through the minister of the Emperor residing here, a full power and instructions have been transmitted to the minister of the United States at St. Petersburg, to arrange, by amicable negotiation, the respective rights and interests of the two nations on the northwest coast of

this continent. A similar proposal has been made by His Imperial Majesty to the government of Great Britain, which has likewise been acceded to. . . . In the discussions to which this interest has given rise, and in the arrangements by which they may terminate, the occasion has been judged proper for asserting as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.¹ [Paragraph 7, Message of December 2, 1823.]

[2] In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so. It is only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparation for our defense. With the movements in this hemisphere, we are, of necessity, more immediately connected, and by causes which must be obvious to all enlightened and impartial observers. The political system of the allied powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America. This difference proceeds from that which exists in their respective governments. And to the defense of our own, which has been achieved by the loss of so much blood and treasure, and matured by the wisdom of their most enlightened citizens, and under which we have enjoyed unexampled felicity, this whole nation is devoted. We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers, to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power, we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power, in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States. . . . Our policy in regard to Europe, which was adopted at an early stage of the wars which have so long agitated that quarter of the globe, nevertheless remains the same, which is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers; to consider the government *de facto* as the legitimate gov-

¹ Am. State Papers, For. Rel., vol. v, p. 246.

ernment for us ; to cultivate friendly relations with it, and to preserve those relations by a frank, firm and manly policy, meeting, in all instances, the just claims of every power, submitting to injuries from none. But in regard to these continents, circumstances are eminently and conspicuously different. It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness ; nor can any one believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition, in any form, with indifference.¹ [Paragraphs 48 and 49, Message of December 2, 1823.]

It will be observed that the two passages above quoted, which are sometimes—for example, in Wharton's *International Law Digest*—printed together, as if they formed one continuous passage and were intended to convey one idea, are widely separated in President Monroe's message. In reality they relate to two distinct subjects. I will discuss them in their order.

I.

The first passage has by more than one writer been said to mean : “No more European colonies on these continents.” In a proper sense this interpretation is correct. But it is not correct if it is intended to ascribe to President Monroe the declaration that the United States would resist any acquisition whatever of territory on either of the American continents by a European power. The history of the passage, as well as its language, shows that it related solely to the acquisition of territory by original occupation or settlement ; that it did not refer to acquisition by gift, purchase or other form of voluntary transfer, or even as the result of war ; and that it was not designed to commit the government of the United States in respect of any territory but that which it claimed as its own. These propositions can be plainly demonstrated.

In 1821 the Emperor of Russia issued a ukase by which he assumed, as owner of the shore, to exclude foreigners from

¹ Am. State Papers, For. Rel., vol. v, p. 250.

carrying on commerce and from navigating and fishing within a hundred Italian miles of the northwest coast of America, from Bering Straits down to the 51st parallel of north latitude. As this assertion of title embraced territory which was claimed by the United States as well as by Great Britain, both those governments protested against it. In consequence the Russian government proposed to adjust the matter by amicable negotiation; and instructions to that end were prepared for Mr. Middleton, then our minister to Russia, and for Mr. Rush, our minister to England, in the summer of 1823. John Quincy Adams was then secretary of state. At a meeting of the cabinet on June 28 the subject of Mr. Middleton's instructions was discussed, and Mr. Adams expressed the opinion that the claim of the Russians could not be admitted, because they appeared to have no "settlement" upon the territory in dispute. On July 17 he informed Baron Tuyl, the Russian minister, at a conference at the Department of State,

that we [the United States] should contest the right of Russia to any territorial establishment on this continent, and that we should assume distinctly the principle that the American continents are no longer subjects for *any* new European colonial establishments.¹

When the principle was announced in the message of December 2, President Monroe spoke of "future colonization."

Now, what was meant by the term "colonization"? The answer is, simply what was meant by the terms "settlement" and "colonial establishments," previously employed by Mr. Adams. The word "colonization" has a definitive meaning. It signifies the settlement by immigrants of a region not under the control of any civilized power, unless that of the parent country. Indeed, Mr. Adams, in his instructions to Mr. Rush, which are more fully quoted hereafter, clearly expressed himself in that sense. "Occupied," he says, "by civilized nations, they [the American continents] will be accessible to Europeans and each other on that footing alone." It was in this sense that Mr. Adams and President Monroe used the term colonization.

¹ Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, vol. vi, p. 163.

They used it to denote what it was then commonly understood to mean, the acquisition of title to territory by original occupation and settlement.

It is to be observed that Mr. Monroe said that this was a question affecting, not "our peace and safety," but our "rights and interests." As there were already European colonies on our very borders, it was obvious that the founding of a colony by a European power somewhere in South America could not be considered as jeopardizing our security. How was it, then, that the principle involved our "rights and interests"?

It did so in two particulars, the first of which was in connection with our dispute with Russia. Mr. Adams and President Monroe denied the existence of Russian settlements in the territory in dispute; and, claiming the territory as our own, they necessarily denied the right of Russia or of any other European power to colonize it.

The second particular was our trade. Under the colonial system then in vogue, European countries rigidly excluded foreign nations from commercial intercourse with their colonies. An exaggerated attempt at such exclusion is seen in the ukase of 1821, to which I have just referred. By the Nootka Sound Convention between Great Britain and Spain, of October 28, 1790, it was agreed that Spain, so far as her actual settlements in North America extended, should possess not simply an exclusive right of territory, but also an exclusive right of navigation and of fishery to the distance of ten miles from the coast. The extent to which early in this century exclusive ideas prevailed, is difficult for us to realize in this later period of commercial intercourse with European colonies, a period in which we have seen special arrangements for reciprocity with Canada, with the British West Indies and British Guiana, and with Cuba and Porto Rico.

The meaning of the term colonization, and the idea of opposition to colonial exclusion, were clearly expressed by Mr. Adams, in an instruction of July 2, 1823, to Mr. Rush, as follows :

Those independent nations [Mexico and the other Spanish-American states] will possess the rights incident to that condition, and their territories will of course be subject to no *exclusive* right of navigation in their vicinity, or of access to them by any foreign nation. A necessary consequence of this state of things will be, that the American continents henceforth will no longer be subjects of colonization. Occupied by civilized, independent nations, they will be accessible to Europeans and to each other on that footing alone ; and the Pacific Ocean, in every part of it, will remain open to the navigation of all nations, in like manner with the Atlantic. . . . The application of colonial principles of exclusion, therefore, cannot be admitted by the United States as lawful, upon any part of the northwest coast of America, or as belonging to any European nation.¹

It may be said that if Mr. Adams intended to do no more than announce that territory already occupied by civilized powers was not subject to future colonization, he merely stated a truism. But in its application to the American continents at that time the announcement was far from being a truism. It was by no means generally admitted that the American continents were then wholly occupied by civilized nations. There were vast regions of territory not actually settled by the subjects of civilized powers.

It has been seen that, while the announcement as to future colonization was made in general terms, applicable to the whole of the American continents, it bore a special relation to our rights and interests in the northwest coast. It did not become the subject of cabinet deliberation. This could not have been the case if there had been an intention to announce a new policy which the United States was to maintain in behalf of all the Americas. We doubtless had an interest, as Mr. Webster said in 1826, in inducing Mexico and other American governments "to settle it, as a part of their policy, not to allow colonization within their respective territories."² It was against our interests to lose a right of commercial intercourse which we

¹ Am. State Papers, For. Rel., vol. v, p. 447. The same ideas were again expressed by Mr. Adams in his message to the House of Representatives of March 15, 1826. Cf. next page.

² Speech on Panama Mission, Webster's Works, vol. iii, p. 207.

then enjoyed. At the same time we did not assume in this regard to dictate to our neighbors or to give any pledges to them ; and in their contest with Spain, which was in name if not in fact still pending, we held an attitude of neutrality.

But all doubt as to how far it was intended to go in the announcement as to future colonization, has been precluded by Mr. Adams himself, who was the author of the argument. In his special message to Congress of December 26, 1825, touching the Panama Congress, he suggested, as one of the subjects that might be discussed,

an agreement between all the parties represented at the meeting that each will guard *by its own means* against the establishment of any future European colony within its borders. . . . This was more than two years since announced by my predecessor to the world as a principle resulting from the emancipation of both the American continents. It may be so developed to the new southern nations that they will all feel it as an essential appendage to their independence.¹

Again, in his message to the House of Representatives, of March 15, 1826, Mr. Adams declared that,

should it be deemed advisable to contract any conventional engagement on this topic, our views would extend no further than to a mutual pledge of the parties to the compact *to maintain the principle in application to its own territory.*²

In accordance with these definitions, Mr. Clay, who was then secretary of state, discussing the same subject in his instructions to our plenipotentiaries to Panama, of May 8, 1826, expressly stated that it was

not intended to commit the parties who may concur in that [joint] declaration *to the support of the particular boundaries* which may be claimed by any one of them ; nor is it proposed to commit them *to a joint resistance* against any future attempt to plant a new colony.³

The origin of this specific declaration on the subject of boundaries is instructive. It did not escape the perspicacious

¹ Proceedings of the Int. Am. Conference, vol. iv, p. 22.

² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

statesmen of that time that, with a boundary dispute of our own on the northwest coast, embracing a territory of 600,000 square miles, even a declaration that each power would "maintain the principle in application to its own territories," might involve greater responsibilities than it would be proper for us to assume. Mr. Rives, in the House of Representatives, pointed out that such a declaration might be construed as pledging us to make good our title to all the territory we claimed. In reply, Mr. Buckner, after reading various passages from Mr. Adams's message, said that, unless the president was to be suspected of designing "a most unprincipled deception," the proposed declaration was intended to apply only to uncontested territory.¹ When instructions to the plenipotentiaries were given, Mr. Clay expressly declared that it was not intended to commit any of the parties "to the support of the particular boundaries" which it claimed.

Thus ended for a period of twenty years the official discussion of President Monroe's announcement on the subject of future colonization. No resolutions were introduced in Congress to give the announcement effect. On the contrary, the House of Representatives, while the appropriation for the Panama mission was under discussion, adopted, by a vote of 99 to 95, a resolution declaring its opinion

that the government of the United States ought not to be represented at the Congress of Panama except in a diplomatic character, nor ought they to form any alliance, offensive or defensive, or negotiate respecting such an alliance, with all or any of the Spanish-American republics; nor ought they to become parties with them, or either of them, to any joint declaration for the purpose of preventing the interference of any of the European powers with their independence or form of government, or to any compact for the purpose of preventing colonization upon the continent of America; but that the people of the United States should be left free to act, in any crisis, in such a manner as their feelings of friendship towards these republics and as their own honor and policy may at the time dictate.²

¹ Cong. Debates, 1825-26, vol. ii, part 2, p. 2091.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 2369, 2457.

If this resolution, which was offered as an amendment to the bill making an appropriation for the expenses of the plenipotentiaries to Panama, had not been opposed as trenching on the constitutional powers of the executive in dealing with foreign affairs, the majority for it doubtless would have been overwhelming. Nearly every speaker who opposed it expressed his concurrence in the principle which it announced. Mr. Webster declared that, apart from constitutional objections, "he had felt a very sincere disposition to agree to it."¹ Before the American plenipotentiaries reached their destination, the Panama Congress had adjourned, and consequently no declarations of any kind were made.² The subject sank out of sight. In many of the contemporary discussions of President Monroe's message, the declaration on the subject of colonization is barely if at all referred to. The subject that aroused public interest and excited the popular feeling was that treated in the second passage of the message,—the passage relating to the threatened intervention of the allied powers.

II.

This second passage, which was anxiously considered by President Monroe and his cabinet, related to the threatened interference of a combination of European powers in the political affairs of the independent American states. On September 26, 1815, the Emperors of Austria and Russia and the King of Prussia concluded at Paris a treaty which was known as the Holy Alliance. The object of this league was

¹ Cong. Debates, 1825-26, vol. ii, part 2, p. 2021. Mr. Everett said: "On one of these points, the resistance to colonization, when the southern republics shall become more fully informed of the position of the United States in reference to that question, most assuredly they will withdraw the wish, if they now entertain it, to enter into an alliance with us" (p. 2431).

² The Panama Congress met June 22, 1826, and adjourned July 15, to meet again at Tacubaya, Mexico. Only four of the Spanish-American states sent representatives. Of these states only one, Colombia, ratified any part of the treaties that were formulated. Mr. Clay, in supplementary instructions directing our plenipotentiaries to go to Tacubaya, says the "ambitious projects and views of Bolivar" had dampened the hopes of a favorable result of the congress. The congress never reassembled.

declared to be the administration of government, in matters both internal and external, according to the precepts of justice, charity and peace; and to this end the allied monarchs, "looking upon themselves as delegated by Providence" to rule over their respective countries, engaged to "lend one another, on every occasion and in every place, assistance, aid and support." In the course of time, as revolt against the arrangements of the Treaty of Vienna became more widespread and more pronounced, the alliance ceased to wear its originally benevolent aspect and came more and more to assume the form of a league for the protection of the principle of legitimacy—the principle of the divine right of kings as opposed to the rights of the people—against the encroachments of liberal ideas. Congresses were held at Aix-la-Chapelle, Troppau and Laybach, for the purpose of maturing a program to that end. The league was joined by the King of France; but England, whose Prince Regent had originally given it his informal adhesion, began to grow hostile. Her own government, with its free and parliamentary institutions, was founded on a revolution; and the allies, in the circular issued at Troppau, had associated "revolt and crime," and had declared that the European powers "had an undoubted right to take a hostile attitude in regard to those states in which the overthrow of the government might operate as an example." In the circular issued at Laybach they denounced "as equally null, and disallowed by the public law of Europe, any pretended reform effected by revolt and open force." Popular movements were forcibly suppressed in Piedmont and Naples. In October, 1822, representatives of the allies assembled at Verona especially for the purpose of concerting measures against the revolutionary government in Spain. As the result of their deliberations they issued a circular in which they announced their determination "to repel the maxim of rebellion, in whatever place and under whatever form it might show itself"; and they adjourned with the secret understanding that France should intervene to suppress the constitutional government in Spain. Their ultimate object was more explicitly expressed in a secret treaty in which they

engaged mutually "to put an end to the system of representative governments" in Europe, and to adopt measures to destroy "the liberty of the press."

In April, 1823, France proceeded to execute the plans of the allies by invading Spain, for the purpose of restoring the absolute monarch Ferdinand VII. Before the close of the ensuing summer such progress had been made in the execution of this design that notice was given to the British government that, as soon as the allies should have achieved their military objects in Spain, they would propose a congress with a view to the termination of the revolutionary governments in Spanish America. At this time Lord Castlereagh, who had always been favorably disposed towards the alliance, had been succeeded in the conduct of the foreign affairs of England by George Canning, who reflected the popular sentiment as to the policy of the allied powers. The independence of the Spanish-American governments, which had now been acknowledged by the United States, had not as yet been recognized by Great Britain. But English merchants, like those of the United States, had developed a large trade with the Spanish-American countries, a trade which the restoration of those regions to a colonial condition, whether under Spain or any of the allies, would, under the commercial system then in vogue, have cut off and destroyed.

As the interests of the United States and of England were thus to a great extent identical, Canning towards the close of the summer of 1823 began to sound Mr. Rush, our minister at London, as to the possibility of a joint declaration by the two governments against the intervention of the allies in Spanish America. When Mr. Rush reported these conversations to his government, President Monroe lost no time in taking counsel upon them. Jefferson, whose opinion was asked, replied :

Our first and fundamental maxim should be never to entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe; our second, never to suffer Europe to intermeddle with cis-Atlantic affairs. . . . While the last [Europe] is laboring to become the domicile of despotism, our endeavor should surely be to make our hemisphere that of freedom. One

nation [Great Britain], most of all, could disturb us in this pursuit; she now offers to lead, aid and accompany us in it. By acceding to her proposition we detach her from the bands, bring her mighty weight into the scale of free government, and emancipate a continent at one stroke. . . . Great Britain is the nation which can do us the most harm of any one or all on earth, and with her on our side we need not fear the whole world. With her, then, we should most sedulously cherish a cordial friendship, and nothing would tend more to knit our affections than to be fighting once more side by side in the same cause.

Mr. Madison viewed the suggestion of Canning with favor. In the cabinet of Monroe, Mr. Calhoun inclined to invest Mr. Rush with power to join England in a declaration, even if it should pledge the United States not to take either Cuba or Texas. He believed that the Holy Alliance "had an ultimate eye to us; that they would, if not resisted, subdue South America. . . . Violent parties would arise in this country, one for and one against them, and we should have to fight upon our own shores for our own institutions."¹ The president at first inclined to Calhoun's idea of giving Mr. Rush discretionary powers, but this was opposed by Mr. Adams, who maintained that we could act with England only on the basis of the acknowledged independence of the Spanish-American states. He thought that we should let England make her own declaration.

This England did, without waiting for the decision of the United States. On October 9, 1823, Canning, in an interview with Prince de Polignac, the French ambassador, declared that while Great Britain would remain "neutral" in any war between Spain and her colonies, the "junction" of any foreign power with Spain against the colonies would be viewed as constituting "entirely a new question," upon which Great Britain "must take such decision" as her interests "might require."² This declaration, followed by that of President Monroe for the United States, shattered the plans of the Holy Alliance with reference to Spanish America. Against the two

¹ Adams's Memoirs, vol. vi, p. 206.

² Annual Register, 1824, p. 485.

great maritime powers of the world, the allies were, in respect of any transatlantic project, utterly helpless.

When President Monroe made his declaration, the proceedings of the Holy Alliance had already attracted attention and excited not a little inquietude in the United States. A writer in the *North American Review* for October, 1823, in an article obviously composed several months before the president's message, anxiously inquired :

If success should favor the allied monarchs, would they be satisfied with reforming the government of Spain? Would not the Spanish colonies, as part of the same empire, then demand their paternal attention? And might not the United States next be considered as deserving their kind guardianship?

In truth, the Holy Alliance represented a force avowedly and aggressively hostile to the form of popular government of which the United States furnished the most shining example. It was for this reason that President Monroe declared that any attempt on their part to extend "their system" to any portion of this hemisphere would be considered as "dangerous to our peace and safety." The further declaration, that we could not view any interposition by any European power in the affairs of the governments whose independence we had acknowledged, for the purpose of oppressing them or controlling in any other manner their destiny, in any other light than as "the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States," grew out of the same circumstances as the preceding declaration, and may, as Mr. Calhoun has said, be considered as an appendage to it. Those governments, said Mr. Calhoun, who spoke with peculiar authority on the subject,

had just emerged from their protracted revolutionary struggles. They had hardly yet reached a point of solidity, and in that tender stage the administration of Mr. Monroe thought it proper, not only to make that general declaration in reference to the Holy Alliance, but to make a more specific one against the interference of any European power, in order to countenance and encourage these young republics as far as we could with propriety.¹

¹ App. to *Cong. Globe*, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 630.

Mr. Webster, in 1826, said that the "amount" of President Monroe's declarations was

that this government could not look with indifference on any combination among other powers to assist Spain in her war against the South American states; that we could not but consider any such combination as dangerous or unfriendly to us; and that if it should be formed, it would be for the competent authorities of this government to decide, when the case arose, what course our duty and our interest should require us to pursue.¹

In his speech on the Panama mission, Mr. Webster asserted that the declaration "effected much good, answered the end designed by it." It must, he said, be considered as founded on our rights, and as springing mainly from a regard to their preservation.

It did not commit us, at all events [he said], to take up arms on any indication of hostile feeling by the powers of Europe towards South America. If, for example, all the states of Europe had refused to trade with South America until her states should return to their former allegiance, that would have furnished no cause of interference to us. Or if an armament had been furnished by the allies to act against provinces the most remote from us, as Chili or Buenos Ayres, the distance of the scene of action, diminishing our apprehension of danger and diminishing also our means of effectual interposition, might still have left us to content ourselves with remonstrance. But a very different case would have arisen if an army, equipped and maintained by these powers, had been landed on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, and commenced the war in our own immediate neighborhood. Such an event might justly be regarded as dangerous to ourselves, and, on that ground, call for decided and immediate interference by us. The sentiments and the policy announced by the declaration, thus understood, were, therefore, in strict conformity to our duties and our interest.²

On January 20, 1824, Mr. Clay, with reference to the message of the preceding month, introduced in the House of Representatives the following resolution:

Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the people of these

¹ Cong. Debates, 1825-26, vol. ii, part 2, p. 1807.

² Webster's Works, vol. iii, p. 204.

states would not see, without serious inquietude, any forcible interposition by the allied powers of Europe in behalf of Spain, to reduce to their former subjection those parts of the continent of America which have proclaimed and established for themselves, respectively, independent governments, and which have been solemnly recognized by the United States.¹

It is generally stated that upon this resolution no action was taken, but the reason is not disclosed. The Annals of Congress, however, show the reason, and it is in more than one aspect very significant. On May 26 Mr. Clay announced that he "should continue to abstain from pressing upon the attention of the House his resolution, and should allow it to sleep, where it now reposes, on the table." The reason he gave for this decision was that the resolution "proposed an expression of the feelings of Congress in regard to an attack supposed to be meditated by allied Europe upon the independence of Spanish America"; that events since the president's message tended to show that, "if such a purpose was even seriously entertained, it had been relinquished"; and that to pass the resolution "in the absence of any sufficient evidence" of such an inimical design, might be thought "unfriendly, if not offensive."² Mr. Polk once asserted that if the resolution had been subjected to a vote it would have been defeated.³ But however this may be, the reason Mr. Clay gave for permitting it to sleep was characteristic of him as a man, and creditable to him as a statesman.

In the view expressed in the House resolution of 1826, that the people should be "left free to act, in any crisis, in such manner . . . as their own honor and policy may at the time dictate," there is certainly great wisdom. To attempt to anticipate particular cases would be a futile experiment; while, if an effort were made to employ terms so general as to cover all future cases, contingencies might arise in which the government would find itself seriously embarrassed by its own unadvised declarations.

¹ Annals of Cong., 1823-24, vol. i, p. 1104.

² *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 2763.

³ Cong. Debates, 1825-26, vol. ii, part 2, p. 2489.

Attempts have frequently been made to trace back the declarations of President Monroe to utterances of other statesmen made long previously. It has even been said that the germs of the declarations are to be found in Washington's proclamation of neutrality in the war between England and France, and in his Farewell Address. But as all the territory of the American continents, except that occupied by the United States, belonged at that time to European powers, and was more or less involved in their contests, it is difficult to understand how the policy of non-intervention which Washington adopted and inculcated, involved the policy which Monroe thirty years later advocated, of intervention in behalf of independent American states against the aims of the Holy Alliance.

III.

Perhaps Senator John Davis, of Massachusetts, spoke too broadly when he declared in 1848 that Monroe's pronouncement was "dead, buried and forgotten" till James K. Polk dug it up. But if Mr. Polk played at all the part of a resurrectionist, he certainly brought forth, as president, something very different from what he, as a member of the House of Representatives twenty years before, had industriously sought to inter. As a grave-digger, in 1826, he regarded Monroe's message of 1823 "as the mere expression of opinion of the executive, . . . designed, probably, to produce an effect upon the councils of the Holy Alliance." "That effect," he admitted, "it probably had an agency in producing; and if so, it had performed its office."¹ He voted against the Panama mission in all its forms.

In 1845 circumstances had changed. In that year Mr. Polk assumed the presidency, committed to a policy that embraced the annexation of Texas at the south, and the maintenance of our claim to the whole of the Oregon territory at the north. This situation is suggestively, but completely, outlined in his annual message of December 2, 1845, in which he says:

¹ Cong. Debates, 1825-26, vol. ii, part 2, p. 2489.

Lately the doctrine has been broached in some of them [the powers of Europe] of a "balance of power" on this continent to check our advancement. The United States . . . cannot in silence permit any European interference on the North American continent; and should any such interference be attempted, will be ready to resist it at any and all hazards. . . . We must ever maintain the principle, that the people of this continent alone have the right to decide their own destiny. Should any portion of them, constituting an independent state, propose to unite themselves with our confederacy, this will be a question for them and us to determine, without any foreign interposition. We can never consent that European powers shall interfere to prevent such a union, because it might disturb the "balance of power" which they may desire to maintain upon this continent. Near a quarter of a century ago, the principle was distinctly announced to the world, in the annual message of one of my predecessors, that "the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European power." This principle will apply with greatly increased force, should any European power attempt to establish any new colony in North America. . . . Existing rights of every European nation should be respected; but it is due alike to our safety and our interests, that the efficient protection of our laws should be extended over our whole territorial limits, and that it should be distinctly announced to the world as our settled policy, that no future European colony or dominion shall, with our consent, be planted or established on any part of the North American continent.¹

The first part of this passage, with its tacit reference to a statement made by M. Guizot, is obviously aimed at Texas, and the latter part at Oregon. But it is obvious that President Polk, in pronouncing against the establishment by a European power of any "dominion," — a term which includes the acquisition by voluntary transfer or by conquest of territory already occupied, — asserted something quite different from Monroe's declaration against "colonization." He asserted something which should be called the Polk Doctrine rather than the Monroe Doctrine; and it is to be observed that he restricted the new doctrine — which was to be maintained by

¹ Sen. Doc. 1, 29th Cong., 1st sess., p. 14.

us without regard to other American powers, and not merely by each of those powers "by its own means" — to the North American continent.

On January 14, 1846, Mr. Allen, of Ohio, asked leave to introduce in the Senate a resolution, which, after reciting the alleged manifestation by "certain powers of Europe" of a disposition to enforce "the European principle" of the balance of power on the "independent nations of America," read as follows :

Resolved, That Congress, thus concurring with the president, and sensible that this subject has been forced upon the attention of the United States by recent events so significant as to make it impossible for this government longer to remain silent, without being ready to submit to and even to invite the enforcement of this dangerous doctrine, do hereby solemnly declare to the civilized world the unalterable resolution of the United States to adhere to and to enforce the principle, that any effort of the powers of Europe to intermeddle in the social organization or political arrangements of the independent nations of America, or further to extend the European system of government upon this continent by the establishment of new colonies, would be incompatible with the independent existence of the nations, and dangerous to the liberties of the people of America, and therefore would incur, as by the right of self-preservation it would justify, the prompt resistance of the United States.¹

An animated debate took place on the question of leave to introduce this resolution. Mr. Cass, who appeared as the leading advocate of the president's views, particularly called attention to the fact that Mr. Polk, "with more caution" than Mr. Monroe, had limited his declaration to North America, and declared, evidently by inspiration, that he had little doubt that "any attempt to make an English colony of California would present the very case" against which Mr. Polk had "warned his countrymen and the world." Leave to introduce the resolution was granted on January 26 by a vote of twenty-six to twenty-one, Mr. Calhoun, Mr. Crittenden and Mr. Webster voting in the negative. The resolution was referred to the

¹ *Cong. Globe*, 29th Cong., 1st sess., p. 197.

committee on foreign relations, but never was reported. On June 26, 1846, a treaty was concluded with England by which the administration accepted as the boundary of the Oregon territory the line of forty-nine degrees north latitude. Mr. Allen's resolution slept with the battle-cry of "fifty-four forty or fight."

Mr. Polk, however, asserted his non-colonization doctrine again, before our territorial questions with Mexico were settled, in a special message to Congress of April 29, 1848, in relation to Yucatan. An Indian outbreak having occurred in that country, the authorities offered to transfer "the dominion and sovereignty" to the United States, and at the same time made a similar offer to Great Britain and Spain. President Polk recommended the occupation of the territory by the United States, and in so doing declared that "we could not consent to a transfer of this 'dominion and sovereignty' to either Spain, Great Britain or any other European power."¹ This pronouncement went beyond the Monroe Doctrine in any of its parts. The Monroe Doctrine, in all its parts, was based upon the right of American states, whose independence we had acknowledged, to dispose of themselves as they saw fit. It was directed against the interposition of European powers to control their destiny against their will. Mr. Adams expressed this idea in his diary thus :

Considering the South Americans as independent nations, they themselves, and no other nation, had the *right* to dispose of their condition. *We* have no right to dispose of them, either alone or in conjunction with other nations. Neither have any other nations the right of disposing of them without their consent.²

The Polk Doctrine, on the other hand, would forbid the acquisition of dominion by a European power in North America even by voluntary transfer or cession.

On May 4, 1848, a bill to enable the president "to take temporary military occupation of Yucatan"³ was introduced in

¹ *Cong. Globe*, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 709.

² Adams's *Memoirs*, vol. vi, p. 186.

³ *Cong. Globe*, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 727.

the Senate, and its passage was urged on grounds both of humanity and of national policy. But on May 18 Mr. Hannegan, a warm supporter of the administration, who had reported the bill from the committee on foreign relations, of which he was chairman, asked that it be informally passed over, as news had been received of the conclusion of a treaty between the whites and the Indians. This disposed of the question of humanity, if not of the question of policy; but the bill was not again called up.¹ In the course of the debate to which it gave rise, Mr. Hannegan pointed out that President Monroe "embraced in his declarations both the North and the South American continents, while Mr. Polk had uniformly restricted himself to the former."²

On January 4, 1853, Mr. Cass introduced in the Senate a resolution compounded of the Monroe Doctrine and the Polk Doctrine, with special application to Cuba. It was as follows:

Be it resolved, &c., That the United States do hereby declare that "the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European power." And while "existing rights should be respected," and will be by the United States, they owe it to their own "safety and interests" "to announce, as they now do, that no future European colony or dominion shall, with their consent, be planted or established on any part of the North American continent." And should the attempt be made, they thus deliberately declare that it will be viewed as an act originating in motives regardless of their "interests and their safety," and which will leave them free to adopt such measures as an independent nation may justly adopt in defense of its rights and its honor.

And be it further resolved, That while the United States disclaim any designs upon the Island of Cuba, inconsistent with the laws of nations and with their duties to Spain, they consider it due to the vast

¹ *Cong. Globe*, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 778.

² Mr. Cass, arguing in favor of the occupation of Yucatan, said: "Yucatan has a right to go where she can, with her sovereignty in her hand, and demand protection from the powers of the earth, and offer her own allegiance in return for it. . . . That she may do so, without giving us any just cause of offense whatever, and thus accomplish her mission without being involved in any controversy with us, is too clear to be called in question."

importance of the subject, to make known in this solemn manner, that they should view all efforts on the part of any other power to procure possession, whether peaceably or forcibly, of that island, which as a naval or military position must, under circumstances easy to be foreseen, become dangerous to their southern coast, to the Gulf of Mexico and to the mouth of the Mississippi, as unfriendly acts, directed against them, to be resisted by all the means in their power.¹

On this resolution no action was taken, though it gave rise to a debate, one of the features of which was the presentation by Senator John P. Hale, of New Hampshire, of an amendment to make the resolution apply to Canada as well as to Cuba, a proposition which Mr. Cass endeavored to treat with as much contempt as was possible under the circumstances.

It will be observed that in all these discussions of the Monroe Doctrine after its revival in 1845, attention was confined to the non-colonization clause, as misinterpreted by Mr. Polk. The reason for this fact is that it was understood that Monroe's declaration against the extension by the allied powers of "their system" to any portion of this hemisphere, related to the system of the Holy Alliance, and that it had, as Mr. Polk and Mr. Webster said in 1826, performed its office and answered the end designed by it. This understanding was clearly expressed by Mr. Cass, the most strenuous and advanced of the revivalists, in 1856. In a debate in that year he said that the message of Monroe meant (1) that it was "impossible for the allied powers to extend their political system to any part of America, without endangering our peace and happiness," and (2) that the American continents "were henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European power."

It is extraordinary, sir, [he continued] that any one could suppose that these declarations had reference only to the peculiar position of the Spanish colonies. *The first had*, but the second was addressed to all nations, and was intended to operate during all time.

¹ *Cong. Globe*, 32d Cong., 1st sess., p. 199.

From the foregoing review it is manifest :

1. That the so-called Monroe Doctrine was a measure of defense, not of aggression.

2. That it was directed against a threatened intervention by a combination of European powers for the purpose of reducing independent American states to subjection to a European power. We told them that we should consider "any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety." What was their "system"? In its internal manifestation it meant the maintenance of an absolute and despotic government, denying liberty and representation to the citizen, suppressing freedom of speech and of the press, and treating even the advocacy of liberal ideas as a crime ; in its external manifestation it meant intervention such as took place in Piedmont, Naples and Spain, for the purpose of putting down constitutional governments and setting up absolute and despotic governments in their place. It was not possible for the United States to contemplate with indifference the establishment of such governments, in a spirit of aggression, from the northern borders of California and Mexico to Cape Horn.¹

3. That while, in the course we took, we acted with a regard to our own peace and safety, we did not assume to dictate to other American states the course they should pursue.

4. That, in our declaration in regard to future colonization, we had in mind our own interests and primarily our territorial dispute on the northwest coast; that, in announcing the principle, we did it in general terms, intending to recommend it to other independent American states for adoption as a part of

¹ *Cong. Globe*, 34th Cong., 1st sess., appendix, p. 69. Edward Livingston, in a speech made in the House of Representatives in 1826 in advocacy of the Panama mission, said that the declaration in regard to the allied powers, "related only to the state of things that then existed. It was made when all the great powers of Europe, except Great Britain, were confederated for the avowed purpose of putting down representative government in Europe; when the object of the confederation had been effected in Naples and was in full operation against Spain, and when the extension of the same principles to America, then not only a probable event, but one known to be the subject of deliberation, would have endangered our own political institutions." *Cong. Debates*, vol. ii, part 2, p. 2212.

their policy; and that, far from intending to pledge ourselves to help other independent states to maintain their boundary claims, we were not even willing to pledge ourselves to maintain our own.

IV.

The recrudescence of the Monroe Doctrine which we have witnessed in the last few years is distinguished by the exhibition of certain illusions, chief among which is the notion that we owe the preservation of our liberties to the full and precise maintenance of the declarations of 1823 in the perverted and exaggerated sense in which they have at certain subsequent periods been construed. The following examples will show the erroneous character of this notion.

In 1829 the government of Buenos Ayres, claiming to act as successor to the rights of Spain, appointed a governor for the Malvinas or Falkland Islands, and established a colony there. In due time some of our citizens, while engaged in killing seals on the islands, were arrested and their ships confiscated. Not long afterwards a United States man-of-war called at the islands, released the citizens and the ships, and arrested and deported the Buenos Ayrean governor and colonists. The British government then resumed possession of the islands. The Argentine government to this day maintains that these proceedings involved a gross violation of the Monroe Doctrine. We have never admitted it.

In 1835 representations were made to the United States by the government of Central America that the British were extending their settlements in Balize into Guatemala, and our mediation was invoked on the ground that "it had always been the policy of the United States to prevent and resist European settlements in America." President Jackson and his cabinet declined to take any action on the subject.

In 1828 Brazil and Buenos Ayres, by a treaty concluded through the mediation of England, recognized the independence of what now constitutes the Republic of Uruguay. In 1844 Brazil invoked the intervention of England and France to protect

the independence of Uruguay against a Buenos Ayrean attack. In compliance with this request those governments in 1845 instituted a blockade of the coasts of Buenos Ayres. Against this act of intervention the United States made no protest.

By the treaty with Great Britain of 1846, terminating the Oregon dispute, we divided a territory of upwards of six hundred thousand square miles, to the whole of which Mr. Polk had pronounced our title to be "clear and unquestionable." No one then believed that in yielding half of this territory to the colonization and government of an European power, we endangered our peace and safety.

In 1848, while the question of occupying Yucatan was before the Senate, a report appeared in the press concerning British aggressions in Venezuela. It was stated by a "writer who appeared to be well informed upon the subject," that the British had in 1841 encroached on Spanish Guiana to the extent of twenty thousand square miles, and that they had since extended their possessions to the whole of Spanish Guiana, amounting in all to a hundred and eighty thousand square miles, or nearly double what they are said now to claim. Mr. Niles, a senator from Connecticut, brought the subject to the attention of the Senate, as a warning against the responsibilities that might be involved in the views which he understood certain members of the Senate to hold. The advocates of these views do not, however, appear to have referred to the subject, unless there was such a reference by Mr. Cass, when he said :

The honorable Senator from Connecticut (Mr. Niles) considers the reiteration of the principle by the present executive, and perhaps its original annunciation by Mr. Monroe, as the claim of a right to regulate all the affairs of this continent, so far as respects Europeans. But this, sir, is an entire misconception of the whole subject. It has, however, prevailed somewhat extensively, both here and elsewhere, though it seems to me that the slightest consideration of the messages referred to would have corrected, or rather prevented, this flagrant error. Neither of these presidents, the past or the present, assumed to interfere with any existing rights of other nations upon this continent. Neither of them called in question their right to hold and improve the colonies they possessed, at their own pleasure. Such an

assumption would have been equally obtrusive and ineffectual; and how the opinion could have prevailed that has been advanced, no one can tell; for, in the documents themselves, the true doctrine is cautiously guarded and existing rights considered as unassailable.

The Clayton-Bulwer treaty of 1850, and not the Monroe Doctrine, placed the first actual restriction upon the extension by a European power of its dominion in this hemisphere.

If those who imagine that our liberties have been preserved by the Monroe Doctrine are asked to show what it has accomplished since it answered its original design, they invariably point to the retreat of the French from Mexico. But we did not on that occasion profess to act upon the Monroe Doctrine. Our position rested upon the principle of opposition to manifest and dangerous aggression, and doubtless would have been the same if President Monroe's message had never been written. On January 15, 1811, twelve years before that message was published, Congress, in secret session, "taking into view the peculiar situation of Spain and her American provinces," and "the influence which the destiny of the territory adjoining the southern border of the United States might have upon their security, tranquillity, and commerce," resolved that the United States could not "without serious inquietude, see any part of said territory pass into the hands of any foreign power"; and the president was authorized to occupy all or any part of the Floridas, "in the event of an attempt to occupy the same, or any part thereof, by any foreign government."¹

V.

At the present time an idea seems to prevail that the Monroe Doctrine committed us to a kind of protectorate over the independent states of this hemisphere, in consequence of which we are required to espouse their quarrels, though we cannot control their conduct. To state this theory is to refute it. Like other independent nations, we are at liberty to act with some regard to our own interests. We should, indeed, always be ready to extend

¹ U. S. Stats. at Large, vol. iii, p. 471.

the good offices of friendship in every proper case. But the idea that our position is that of an involuntary military force, at the beck and call of every American state that may stand in need of it, and that we are to supply their deficiencies in men and in money, in order that they may conduct their controversies with European powers on a basis of equality in force and resources, is an idea that must be repugnant to the sense of every reflecting man.

We have not assumed to forbid European powers to settle their quarrels with American states by the use of force any more than we have hesitated to do so ourselves. In 1861 we admitted the right of France, Spain and Great Britain to proceed jointly by force against Mexico for the satisfaction of claims. Indeed, Mr. Seward, in an instruction to our minister to France of June 21, 1862, said:

France has a right to make war against Mexico, and to determine for herself the cause. We have a right and interest to insist that France shall not improve the war she makes to raise up in Mexico an anti-republican or anti-American government, or to maintain such a government there. France has disclaimed such designs, and we, besides reposing faith in the assurances given in a frank, honorable manner, would, in any case, be bound to wait for, and not anticipate, a violation of them.

It was not till these assurances were violated, that Mr. Seward protested.

In 1842 and again in 1844, Great Britain blockaded the port of San Juan de Nicaragua. In 1851 the same power laid an embargo on traffic at the port of La Union, in Salvador, and blockaded the whole coast of that country. In 1862 and 1863 the same power seized Brazilian vessels in Brazilian waters in reprisal for the plundering of the bark *Prince of Wales* on the Brazilian coast. In 1838 France blockaded the ports of Mexico as an act of redress for unsatisfied demands. From 1865 till some scarcely defined date Spain was at war with the republics on the west coast of South America. The bombardment of Valparaiso by a Spanish fleet was a prominent incident of the conflict. It was in respect of this conflict that

Mr. Seward, in an instruction to Mr. Kilpatrick, our minister to Chili, of June 2, 1866, while declaring that we did not intervene in wars between European and American states "if they are not pushed, like the French war in Mexico, to the political point," said:

Those who think that the United States could enter as an ally into every war in which a friendly republican state on this continent becomes involved, forget that peace is the constant interest and the unwavering policy of the United States. They forget the frequency and variety of wars in which our friends in this hemisphere engage themselves, entirely independent of all control or counsel of the United States. We have no armies for the purpose of aggressive war; no ambition for the character of a regulator. Our constitution is not an imperial one, and does not allow the executive government to engage in war except upon the well considered and deliberate decree of the Congress of the United States. . . . If there is any one characteristic of the United States which is more marked than any other, it is that they have from the time of Washington adhered to the principle of non-intervention, and have perseveringly declined to seek or contract entangling alliances, even with the most friendly states.¹

In 1846 we ourselves went to war with Mexico. In 1854 the commander of one of our men-of-war, having failed to obtain from the town of Greytown an indemnity of \$24,000 for the seizure and destruction of property, and an apology for an affront to the American minister by some of the inhabitants of the place, bombarded it, and afterwards, "in order to inculcate a lesson never to be forgotten," burned such buildings as were left standing. In 1859 we sent an expedition to obtain redress from Paraguay. In 1890, while the Pan-American Conference was in session, Congress passed an act to authorize the president to use force to collect a claim from Venezuela. In 1892 we sent an ultimatum to Chili, with which she had the wisdom to comply.

The suggestion has been made that it is a violation of the Monroe Doctrine for a European power to employ force against an American republic for the purpose of collecting a

¹ Dip. Cor., 1866, part ii, p. 413.

debt or satisfying a pecuniary demand, whatever may have been its origin. As has been seen, there is nothing in President Monroe's declarations even remotely touching this subject; and the examples I have given of the employment of force by the United States as well as by other powers for such objects show that the American republics have not heretofore been supposed to enjoy so desirable an exemption. But I think I can trace the idea to its origin. In Wharton's *International Law Digest*, under the section entitled "Monroe Doctrine," there is the following sentence: "The government of the United States would regard with grave anxiety an attempt on the part of France to force by hostile pressure the payment by Venezuela of her debt to French citizens." The authorities cited for this statement are two alleged manuscript instructions of Mr. Blaine to our minister to France, of July 23 and December 16, 1881. The whole matter is, however, erroneously stated. Both the instructions are published in the volume of Foreign Relations for 1881. They refer, not to "hostile pressure," but to a rumored design on the part of France of "taking forcible possession of some of the harbors and a portion of the territory of Venezuela in compensation for debts due to citizens of the French republic." They nowhere express any "grave anxiety." They do not mention the Monroe Doctrine. They merely argue that such a proceeding as that reported to be in contemplation would be unjust to other creditors of Venezuela, including the United States, since it would deprive them of a part of their security. And they express the "solicitude" of the government of the United States "for the higher object of averting hostilities between two republics for each of which it feels the most sincere and enduring friendship." It is plain that this development of the Monroe Doctrine, based upon the erroneous passage in Wharton's *Digest*, has no actual foundation whatever.

In April last a great outcry was raised over an alleged violation of the Monroe Doctrine by certain proceedings at Corinto. The facts were that on August 16, 1894, the Nicaraguan commissioner at Bluefields, Señor Madriz, invited a number of

persons, including two citizens of the United States and twelve British subjects, one of whom was the British pro-consul, to call at his office. Each one of the persons so invited laid aside his business and proceeded to the commissioner's office. When they arrived there, they were ushered in, but not into the presence of the commissioner. On the contrary, they were arrested and forcibly deported from the country. No information as to the cause of their arrest was given them. They were denied all opportunity to arrange their business or to visit their families before their forcible expulsion. The two American citizens were in the following October permitted to return to the country under circumstances tending to soothe their feelings. Some of the British subjects were "pardoned," and permitted to return towards the close of December. Among those not "pardoned" was the British pro-consul, Mr. Hatch. For the violent treatment of her consular representative Great Britain exacted a fine of \$75,000 as punitive damages or "smart money." The amount of the fine, though large, was not so large as to involve the independence of the country, and its payment did not entail so great a general loss, to say nothing of individual suffering, as would have resulted from the bombardment and destruction of a commercial town. The question of the private losses of her subjects Great Britain offered to leave to arbitration. It is obvious that these proceedings involved neither the Monroe Doctrine nor the Polk Doctrine.

JOHN BASSETT MOORE.